

# *Advent Reflections*

*December 14, 2019*



Anticipation: For some of us the word conjures up an old Carly Simon song; for others, a Heinz ketchup commercial. For me, it's expectation intermingled with hope.

I was reminded of this last week when I attended a basket raffle with some friends. In case you haven't attended one before, it's basically a raffle where you buy lots of tickets and throw some into a bucket in front of a basket containing gifts you would like to win. After everyone has submitted their raffle tickets, numbers are drawn for each gift basket. It amazed me that we could get so caught up in the process of deciding which baskets we would want (as if we were going to win each one we dropped our ticket into). The anticipation and hope were palpable. People were on the edge of their seats, waiting for their numbers to be called. With each loss came renewed excitement that surely the next number called would be ours. Hope was surely alive in that church hall.

The anticipation of Elijah's arrival was just as palpable. Since the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. when the prophet Malachi foretold the coming of the Messiah after the reappearance of the prophet Elijah, Jews have been living in hope that they would witness Elijah's return. Each Passover observant Jews set an extra place at their table for Elijah, just in case he might grace them with his presence. An Israeli once told me that it was a tradition in Israel that when a person was on his deathbed, someone would come and whisper into the dying person's ear that he had heard that Elijah had just returned. That way, he could die happily, with the hope that the Messiah's arrival was imminent.

How much more certain is our hope as Christians, knowing that Elijah has, indeed, come and has announced our Messiah, Jesus the Christ. (The evangelist Mark makes this

very clear when he describes John the Baptist's clothing and diet: camel hair and locusts and wild honey. Anyone familiar with the Elijah stories would immediately know that John was actually Elijah returned, heralding Jesus as the Messiah.)

All doubt has been removed for Christians. There is no moment of disappointment when "our number isn't called" and the one we believed to be Elijah turns out not to be. Our number has been called and all we've anticipated has come to fruition. We are certain that we've won. Our Messiah, the one we've been hoping for, has come and continues to be birthed in the greatest mystery of all time: The Incarnation. Let us anticipate his arrival once again, aglow with the hope that in eleven more days we will celebrate the flame of light that has come into a darkened world. That light is our hope.

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**Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church  
Lectionary: 186**

**Reading 1 [SIR 48:1-4, 9-11](#)**

In those days,  
like a fire there appeared the prophet Elijah  
whose words were as a flaming furnace.  
Their staff of bread he shattered,  
in his zeal he reduced them to straits;  
By the Lord's word he shut up the heavens  
and three times brought down fire.  
How awesome are you, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds!  
Whose glory is equal to yours?  
You were taken aloft in a whirlwind of fire,  
in a chariot with fiery horses.  
You were destined, it is written, in time to come  
to put an end to wrath before the day of the LORD,  
To turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons,  
and to re-establish the tribes of Jacob.  
Blessed is he who shall have seen you  
and who falls asleep in your friendship.

**Responsorial Psalm [PS 80:2AC AND 3B, 15-16, 18-19](#)**

**R.(4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,  
From your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.  
Rouse your power.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

Once again, O LORD of hosts,

look down from heaven, and see;  
Take care of this vine,  
and protect what your right hand has planted  
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

May your help be with the man of your right hand,  
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.  
Then we will no more withdraw from you;  
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

**Alleluia** [LK 3:4, 6](#)

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel** [MT 17:9A, 10-13](#)

As they were coming down from the mountain,  
the disciples asked Jesus,  
"Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"  
He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things;  
but I tell you that Elijah has already come,  
and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased.  
So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands."  
Then the disciples understood  
that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.